

[Walter R. Morrison]

1

[????] Tales - Stories of Life on a Range

[Gauthier. Sheldon??]

[Rangelore?]

[Tarrant Co., Dist., 7 [55?]

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Walter R. Morrison, 78, living at [110 1/2 E.?] 2dt St, Fort Worth, Texas, was born at Mineola, W Wood, County, Texan, May 7th [?]. His father [o?] operated a sawmill and owned several saddle horses, which were used for traveling by members of the family.

Walter's father taught him to ride as soon as the child was able to sit on a horse and when Walter reached the age of 14 he was a good horseman.

He began his range career at the age of 14, by assisting in driving a herd of cattle from East Texas, to the John Collins ranch. That was the commencement of 23 years spent on the [gange?].

His story of range life follows:

"My age is 78. I was born in Mineola, Woods County, Texas, on the 7th, day of May, [1859?].

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"My father owned a sawmill, located in Mineola and kept several saddle horses and when one of the family wanted to drag off some place a [hoss?] was what they used.

"There was nothing around a sawmill a young kid could do, keep out of the way and that was I was forced to do. To make up for being kept out of the mill, I spent a lot of time riding, when I was not attending school. C12 - 2/11/41 - Texas

"Father put [me?] straddle a hoss when I was old enough to sit up, so when I was old enough to be trusted off alone I was able to handle a hoss.

"The thing that I hankered for as a kid was to be a cow hand. Father bought me a lariat for my [?] present when I was 10 years old. With that [looper?] I began to swing the loop over everything that I could find, not moving at first and then moving objects, and when I was 14 years old I could [?] 2 moving object coming and going.

"When I was 14, that [?], John Collins hands were driving a herd of cattle out of East Texas. They secured a larger herd than John calculated on and needed some extra help. I treated my father until he allowed that I could join the outfit for the drive. It was reckoned I would just make the drive to Collins [?] in Parker county, and then return, but I made such a good hand that when the drive was over, John Collins said, "Kid if you want to join this outfit I can use you". I jumped at the chance and there I stayed for four years.

"Collins ran only, around, [?] head on his Parker County, range and employed 10 waddies, besides his sons Tom and Bob. His large ranch was in [Foard?] County, where there were [35?] waddies in the outfit.

"His Parker County, outfit was located 20 miles West of Fort Worth on the line of Parker and Tarrant Counties.

"I reckoned I was a top rider when I first joined the outfit, but soon learned that I had something to learn about keeping my saddle warm. I was calculating a hoss by those

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father had in his stable and [?] pitching according to the rearing and [?] our hosses pulled when they felt pert.

“About the second day at the 'JC' outfit, 'JC' was the Collins brand, his son Tom, a little older than I said to me, “Have you rode any pitching hosses?” Of course, I thought I had and swelled up like a pigeon and told him that I had rode 3 every hoss that father had brought on our place.

“The I dont have to pick a gentle for you to ride?”

“Shucks no”, I answered, “I am no greener on a hoss”.

“I had been there two days and spent a week on the drive and reckoned that I was a rawhide.

“The next day Tom pointed out a yeller hoss and said. “See that critter today, I'll help you to put the tree on him, he is a trifle skitish with strangers and may skip a little, but in a good saddle”.

“We put the tree on him, I mounted and hit the tree, then I went into space for a spell and when I hit it was the earth that I hit on. Tom was a-standing there and givin' me the laugh.

'I thought that you could ride?', he shot at me.

“I can, but was caught off my guard” I said. “I can ride the critter.”

“I reckon you were, because that hoss just makes a couple skips to get the kinks out of his fins, then is off. All the hands like to ride him”. He said without a smile.

“I'll ride him now, I know what to expect” I tells him.

“I mounted the critter again with my [?] set to stay with the animal. It pronto showed me something about pitching I didn't know. That hoss was a pig pen [builder?], meaning that

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it had no regular way to go, but operated according to notions and they were changable. Well, I grabed leather pronto, but that did no good. I had a death grip on the nub and at the first [eleva?] elevation my hands were the only part of me that was 4 touching leather and when I came down the hoss was not there to catch me. I passed it on the way to the ground, still with a grip on the nub, but I was traveling so fast that the speed broke the hold. I flatten out like a saddle blanket

“The [?] of the ranch, John Collins, was standing by as I pulled my self together. He said: “Kid, you have given the boys enough op'ra for this time. Don't try that critter again for a spell”.

“I was given another critter and went to work. I did some practicing on skipping hosses, as Tom called them. I soon caught the knack and before the mount was over I rode the yellor hoss.

“We had no man bell-cheater on the 'JC'. Mrs. Collins did the cooking, with the help [?] of a colored house man. The 'JC' was what the waddies classed as a 'one hoss outfit.' If we worked away for a day, or so, we carried the chuck on a pack hoss and that was called [grease-pot?] outfit. We then did our own cooking, which was nothing to brag about. We would cook coffee, broil steak over a camp fire, cook beans and bake biscuits and [sinkers?] is a good name for the biscuits.

“Three of us waddies had to night ride. Every night [wee?] would spell each other. Three of us would ride the fore part of the night and three the later part. When a norther hit or a bad storm, all hands would be on the ride.

“There was only one night during the four years I was with the 'JC' outfit that we had the critters get away. The critters on that range were not as wild and skiddish, as a rule 5 a small herd is not so prone to stomp.

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"This night that the herd went wild was late in the spring and the [strom?] hit about midnight. I was riding the fore part of [thennight?] and a couple hours before the buster hit I knew that a bad one was on the way. My hoss had sensed it and was quevering. The cattle had raised and were and were milling. They had sensed the coming buster and wanted to get to some place for shelter.

"I rode into the ranch and raised all the hands. We all began to circle the critters, singing, that is them that could, others tried. It did not sound like a grand op'ra, but it drew the critters attention, and held them at first.

"When the storm hit all the church choirs in the state of Texas, could/ not hold those critters. That is, the thunder, rain, and wind, made such a noise it out dinned everything else. Of course, it was the atmosphere that was out biggest trouble. It looked like a black cat, except when sky-fire turned on a flash and that was a-plenty.

"Those critters would break and run and at first we could turn in the animals, but they would break [anew?] and each time be more stubborn.

"That country is rolling and full of brush in spots and that makes night riding hard, especially in a storm. That night we hit the hills, hollows and brush at top speed, trying to turn those critters and get the herd to milling. We could hear the cattle, because of the stomping of their feet and bumping of their horns, but could not see where there were except [where?] when the sky 6 would flash some light. Then we could see the herd, also see fire play hop-skip-[kump?] on the tips of the cattle's horns. It was my first time to see such as that and had me plumb loco.

"At times like that in when a waddy is called upon to do his best riding. Such shape up is [?] said that [?] cowhand was a man with sand in his gizzard and a hoss." When daylight came on and we could take reckoning of the mess we found that 1000 critters were

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scattered over the country and one waddy was gone. [Bud?] Jones was missing. His hoss was at the pen minus its rider.

“We all hit the drag to hunt the strays and [tow?] of us hit out to find Bud. They found Bud five mils away dragging for the camp on hoof with a broken collar bone. He said that his conk quit working and did now know what happened. When his conk came back to normal, he was laying in a clump of briers. We were a week getting the strays back.

“My next experience which had my gizzard grinding was one where Mrs John Collins showed up as a woman with sand equal to a he-man.

“Bob Collins, son of John, and I were on the range looking for some strays when suddenly we saw about 35 mounted Indians making for us. We headed our hosses toward the ranch, pronto and they kept coming, but never got close enough to brand either of us. It was a pretty race for about five miles, with the Indians throwing a few shots at us, but they all were short, except one that stung my hoss on the flank and caused the hoss to turn on more steam. 7 “The Indians, knew that all the hands were off the ranch at different points on the range. I reckon that they had given the place an eying, because they followed us to the shed and stayed off at a distance. They began to circle the shed, first one then the other would dash in and pour lead at the shed. A few had rifles and could place lead in the shed and stay a spot out of the range of our six-guns.

“Mrs John Collins was in the house. The house was built of stone and had ports at different spots around the house. John always kept several in the house and it was not long until that [atrillery?] was in action. The first shots hit the mark and two Indians hit the ground. With the third shot she winged a redskin and the fourth shot put him in the class of good Indians. By that time the rest pulled out of range, stopping 300 yards away from the house and went into conference.

“We two boys broke for the house and got hold of a rifle. We waited for the [?].

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"We did not have long to wait. They circled to the front of the house and then slowly worked towards the building. Bob and I wanted to shoot as soon as they came into gun range, but Mrs Collins would not have any of it. She said, "You boys harken to me, or I'll box your ears. Those skunks are intending to storm the house, break the door down and over power us. We will wait until they are close so we can't miss a shot. I'll give the order when to shoot. Bob, you take the first one, Walt the next and I'll take [?] and keep shooting that way and we will not [waste?] any shots. The Indians kept coming 8 up and finally she said, "shoot".

"We cut loose and three fell. They then rushed and three more fell before they could reach the porch and at the porch three more fell. Then they turned and ran for their hosses. They high-tailed cross the range.

"A cowhand came through looking for McClean's strays and heard the shooting and saw, at a glance what it was. He draged it for Fort Worth, pronto, and reported the fight to Captain King. King, the head of a party of rangers, came out and with a number of cowhands took out after the Indians.

"I did not go with the trailers, because Mrs Collins insisted that I and her sons stay to help clear up the mess. We dragged the Indians to a sink-hole and threw them in.

"Walt McClean told us that they got a few at the West Fork of the Trinity.

"I understand that the old Collins stone house still stands. It was standing in 1910, at that time I made a trip through that section and stopped at the old house and looked through the port that I did my shooting at them Indians.

"I quit the Collins outfit in 1877 and joined the [?] [Foredice?] outfit. They were located six miles South of Big Springs where the present town of Big Springs gets their water supply. At the time the outfit had their [?] there that a ring has a 10 inch flow of water.

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"The Foredice brand was the picture of four dice. The outfit ran, around 15,000 head. The reason I went there 9 was because my wages were \$30. a month, which was \$5. more than Collins paid me.

"It was six months after I joined the outfit, that I meet up with my Indian friends again. One day there were about 20 of us waddies cutting out calves for branding. Dick Thompson was the [?]-a-doodle-de and he ordered me to the quarters with a note to the ramrod. I had [?] about two miles when I spied 14 redskins and they spied me. They pronto took after me and I turned back to where the waddies were. As it happened, there was a patch of brush betwix the waddies and me. I reavled around the edge of the brush, keeping just out of [the?] [shootingg?] rang. I was on [Nigger?] Babby [on?] of the best hosses a man ever straddled, so I was not bothering my conk about them catching. [me?]. I was after coaxing them Indians back to where the waddies were. Well, I did that, they followed me around that brush [andd?] into that bunch before they got wise to the shape up.

"The waddies, after they finished having their fun, thanked me for the good time I provided. Then them waddies turned loose and [surrounded?] the redskins. It was not long until there were 14 good Indians.

"On the Foredice ranch, the best rider that I ever have seen worked, that was Dick Thompson. He attended to busting hosses for the outfit.

"I have watched that man time and again bust a wild critter and never bother about putting on a saddle, or bridle on the critter. He would throw a loop on a wild critter in 10 the heard and then leve leave his mount holding a taunt line. Dick would go down that line till he reached the critter, grab it by the mane, release the loop then, by holding onto the mane, [swing swing?] on the critters back. There he would stay until the critter had pitched its self down and then ride the hoss into the ranch pen.

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"The best hoss I ever rode was Nigger Baby, I spoke of a bit ago. I named him Nigger Babby, because the hose was so black. He was a wild cuss and it took me eight months to get him working good, but when he was shaped up he was a great saddle. I never did get him to keep from pitching once and a while. He seems to take pleasure out of pitching and did it for fun, but never did so when I was in a pocket. It always was when we were ambling along. Nigger Baby would suddenly elevate a few times, shake his head, switch his tail and then settle down to business.

"That animal finally got to the point where he would come to me from as far as he could hear me call. The hoss would raise its head, listen a second and then come a-running as he got up close he would neigh. He learned to know the cow work as as a man and could work alone. He was the most willing and knowing hoss I ever rode. He would catch on to what was wanted in just one or two [tried?]. And when it came to running he was fast and could run all day.

"I was pert as a hoss buster and a little cocky about it. Foredice had a blue hoss, they called it Blue, that injured one man and killed another. I calculated that I could ride it and told Biggun I could do it. He advised against it, but I went 11 to wrangle the beast. That critter had all the pitching tricks rolled in one, [?] as [lighten?] and a fighter to boot.

"I got a loop on him, saddled and mounted him. He put me into a spell and before I could get out of his way he made for me. He was standing on his hind legs and cutting down at me with his fore feet. The Biggun was standing by and hollered, "lead that animal! lead that beauty". I did not need to be told to use my gun. I was fixing to lead him and gave him a 45 ball betwix the eyes to save my self.

"After I quit the Foredice outfit, I dragged over to the 'JST' outfit, located in Taylor County. The outfit was owned by J. S. Taylor and his brand was made thus

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"On the 'JST', I run into another hoss that came next to Nigger Babby, but a yeller [staleon?] with a brown strip down his back and a brown mane and tail, a pretty fellow, but wild and smart. He was so smart he had beat the loop. There was a counterpart of him on the range that had sent a Mex to the eternal range while the fellow was trying to bust him. The Biggun had let the two hosses alone wanting to save them for breeding purposes.

"One day I was looking for a hoss to bust and a herd was found in a lump of bushes located in a sharp [bend?] of the creek. The hoses were at the further part of the bend where the bank was sheer.

"There was only one way for those critters to get away and that was to pass me, unless they made a 20 foot jump down that bank. In that bunch was the yeller critter and I said to myself your my [?]. "The critters made a break to pass me and as they did I sneered in the yeller babby. He was traveling fast and when he hit the end of the rope my mount was well set and that yeller Lad hit the ground hard. It stayed down long enough for me to put my bandanna over his eyes for a blind and also I [?] the hoss. When the hoss got to its feet, I put the tree on him and turned it loose.

"There was an hour of steady pitching, at the end of that time he was pitched down and I rode the critter into the pen. The Biggun came to look at the hoss and thought it was the one that had a notch in his tail. He insisted that I leave the hoss alone saying," that hoss has killed one man and you'll be the next if you dont leave it alone." I went against his request and made one of the best workers on the outfit.

"Red Smith was with the 'JST' at the time I was there. That man I calculated as the best shot I ever seen draw a gun. I have seen him hit running rabbits at 50 yards with a 38 pistol and if he ever missed no one ever saw him do it.

"He plugged an Indian at 150 yards with a 38 gun. I had plumb missed the shot.

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"A bunch of Indians stole 15 head of cattle from the 'JST'. We trailed them to a creek and saw them on the tudder bank. I fired and missed Red threw down on him and made a good Indian out of that fellow then and there. The boys went on and got the cattle and some of the Indians.

"From the 'JST' outfit I dragged over to the ['BPL,?'] 13 outfit, owned by [Bud?] Collins. It was a hoss outfit when I joined, but they changed it over to a cows during the year. The 'BPL' outfit was located in Palo Pinto County.

"During my stay on the 'BPL' I met up with several gangs of rustlers. On the [?] fork of the Trinity, about 300 yards above where the Fort Worth water works is now located, three rustlers were [naturlize?]. They were caught with a bunch of "BPL' critters. That happened in 1876, or 77. [the?] sheriff came and cut them down.

"A woman, [whosename?] I forget, that was a widow and lived 15 miles South of Fort Worth, lost some critters to rustlers. A party of cowhands took up the trail for her. East of Fort Worth, the rustlers split into three bunches and we did the same. Three of the bunch were caught up with on the line of Denton and Tarrant Counties. When them rustlers left there were traveling feet first. The sheriff found one of the three with a steer's tail sticking in his mouth.

"I stayed with the 'BPL' outfit 12 months then dragged back to the Foredice outfit.

"I don't want to leave the idea that we cow hands did not have some fun along with the tough times. On the Foredice roping, riding and having contest that were in a friendly way, but for blood. Sometimes the contest would be betwix hands of different outfits. Near the Foredice ranch was the old 101 outfit and often contest betwix the hands of the two outfits would be held. 14 "Deer were plentiful and we would contest in roping the animals to see who could bring one in alive. At that I always came out a loser. The deer would always break its neck on me. They had to be handled properly to keep the critter from jumping in

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the air and coming down on their head which would bust their neck every time. It required skill manipulation of the rope to prevent the act. There were a good number of the boys that could bring in the deer alive.

"The worst mess I ever got into roping wild animals, was roping a [two?] year old buffalo bull. I had to cut the [?] to get away from him. That animal did not jump in the air, but at me and the hoss and I am here to say that animal was full of fight.

"I have [seen waddies?] bring in wild cats and all manner of animals, that they had roped, but no two year old buffalo.

"My game was riding. Dick Thompson was the best man on a hoss that I ever had seen. I was equal to him, except on bare back. I could do anything in a saddle that he could, but could not do the bare back stuff.

"Booger Red was on [the?] outfit at the time I was on the Foredice. He was a top rider, but the loop was his main stunt. That man could loop any leg of a running critter from any position. He could just make a rope talk.

"In 1896 a bunch of us cowhands took part in an organized radio. I reckon about the first of such. There were Bob Taylor, son of John, Bob Carter, Booger Red and myself that were the top of the outfit.

"We started at Seynour and there I took the riding from 15 Bogger in the contest there. [?], at Fort Worth, Bob Carter took it from me. We then went to [?] and there Booger got the championship back. In the going Booger always took the contest. We did not make a lot of jack, but had lots of fun. We were earnest in our efforts and sure put the pressure on each other.

"After that radio trip I went to Arkansas and there went in to the business busting cattle. That put an end to my range career. 1 Gauthier. Sheldon F.

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Walter R. Morrison, 78, living at 110 1/2 E. Second St, Fort Worth, Texas, was born at Mineola, Wood co., Texas, May 7, 1859. He began his range career at the age of 14. He worked on the "Red Collins horse ranch for a period of 10 months during the years of 1877-78, at which time the horse ranch was transfered from a horse ranch to a cattle ranch. The ranch was located in Pilo Pento co. During the 10 month, there were gathered 12,000 head of wild mustangs. These horses were driven from the ranch, in herds of about 200 at a time, to Fort Worth, and shipped by rail to various sections E. of Texas, sold and traded for cattle. (This is a supplement to a previous story of his range career)

"Some time in the early fall of 1877, "Red" Collins met me in Fort Worth, and said:

"I am hankering to hire a few extra hands to work on my hoss ranch. I am gathering all my hosses to sell off and put cows on my range. How about you dragging out to my ranch?"

"You've found one of the buckaroos," sez I. When do I start?"

"Soon as you can drag your bones to Pilo Pento co., and land at my headquarters near Santo," sez he.

"I was on the trail headed for the [?] range within an hour. When I landed there the hands were just getting lined up to start fixing things for the rounding up of the hosses.

"The country is a rough and rolling territory. It contains big and small hills, ravins, draws and valleys. Most of it is covered with small timber and the Brazo River crosses the region.

"To catch these wild hosses in that section, called for heaps of riding and work. These hosses used their conk for other purposes than hunting grass and water. They were wise to the ways of man, and resorted to cunning tactics to evade being caught. In addition, they were sure footed and had the staying qualities when it came to running. Putting the wild hoss in this rough and brushy country, you can guess what a job we had to deal with.

"To catch a few of them wild hosses, a trap was not used, because the hosses could be caught about as quickly as one could build a trap. Without a trap, we would run the critters till they were tuckered out. Five or six waddies would spell each other and each ride an hour or so at one time. This way we would keep the mustangs on the run, and in a day or two the animals would be so tuckered we could, with a fresh hoss, ride close enough to throw a loop on them.

"When there is 100 or more hosses to catch, building a trap is worth while. Collins had several thousand to catch that carried his 'JBC' brand, as he was going to clean out his hoss herd. He reckoned there were several thousand, but was not certain about the number. To catch this number a large trap was necessary.

"A herd of 100 or more hosses will always be split up into small herds [?] 25 to around 50 animals, consisting of one stud, about 25 mares and young stock. This small herd will be found grazing clustered together, separated from the other clusters.

"When a rider drives up to a cluster, the herd will [tak?] out. A mare will run in the lead, followed by the rest with the stallion 3 in the [?]. In the event the rider cuts in close, which is seldom possible unless the herd has had a long chase, the stud will try to put up a fight to keep the rider away from the mares. The rest of the herd will continue to run while the stud is fighting their battle alone. The stud will try and lead the rider away from the herd. In hoss society, the stud is the guardian of his herd. Even when the herd is grazing, the stud locates himself at some high point, where he has a view of the surroundings, and there

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stands watch. Let something he calculates to be an enemy approach and you will hear him neigher. When he does, the herd takes off pronto.

“Four or five riders can flank a herd and head it in the desired direction. Because, these animals could be flanked and headed in a certain direction, we could head the animals into a trap.

“A trap is a corral with wing running out from it in a V shape. We build a [larger?] corral with wings extending but about a mile or more, and the outter spread of the wings was about one mile wide. The corral was built of poles, set in the ground upright and a cut six inches apart. The wings was a rail fence.

“Once a bunch of hosses were headed in between the wings, one rider could finish the drive into the corral. When the animals were inside of the corral, we closed the gate and there we could easily rope the animals and do the necessary work of getting the hosses ready for the trail.

“We would locate a cluster and circle the bunch to get it between us and the outter part of the wings, then ride towards the herd. A couple of riders would ride at the side of the animals, put 4 only close enough to keep the hosses headed our way.

“At the start of our corralling, we corralled two to three clusters each day, but toward the [last?] part of the work, when the herd was being reduced to a few, the job was tougher. The herds were harder to locate and more wise, because of the constant working we gave them.

After the critters were in the corral, we roped them, hobbled and put a hackamore on each hoss. The hobble was to keep the animal from running and the hackamore was used to tie to for leading purposes.

“None of the hosses were ridden, all were sold unbroken.

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"We tied four or five together and those would be tied to a tame hoss. We would leave the tame critter with its bunch of wild hosses in the corral for a half day or so. During this time, the wild [?] critters would learn to trail with the [?] animal. Following this wait, the animals were ready to be trailed to Fort Worth.

"One waddy, [?] mounted, would lead for or five of the tame animals with their tied bunch. These wild hosses were loaded into cars at Fort Worth and shipped to various points in La., Miss., Tenn., and other Southeastern points.

"The animals sold for about \$15. on an average

"When we had the range cleared, the count showed we had shipped 12,000 hosses from off Collins' range.

"Red Collins put the money he received from the sale of those hosses into cattle. He bought young cows and steers as the starting herd for his ranch.

From his hoss sales and trades, Collins was able to obtain 5 a herd of 10,000 cattle.

"The cattle were bought at various points. Some were shipped to Fort Worth, by rail and from there driven to Pilo Pinto co., and others were driven from the place of purchase.

"The principle reason which [?] Collins/ [to?] made the change from a cattle to a hoss ranch was the building of a railroad into Fort Worth, which established Fort Worth as a marketing place for cattle.

"At the time Collins was shipping his hosses, it was reckoned the number was the greatest shipped off of any one hoss ranch.